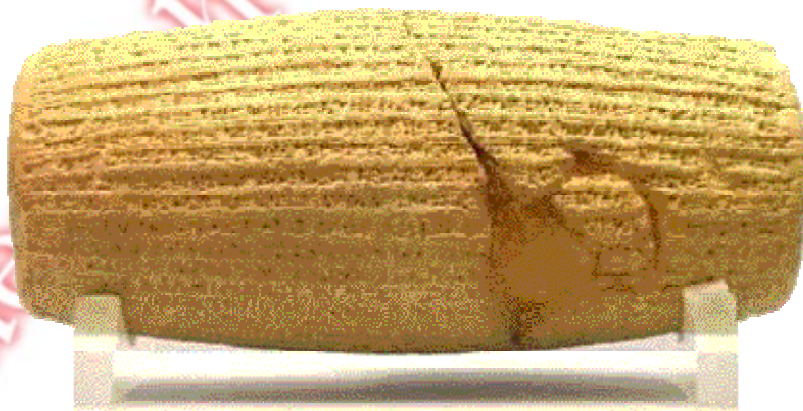


The First Charter Of Human Rights



Cyrus the Great's Cylinder (now in The British Museum)

The charter of Cyrus the Great, a baked-clay Aryan language (Old Persian) cuneiform cylinder, was discovered in 1878 in excavation of the site of Babylon. In it, Cyrus the Great described his human treatment of the inhabitants of Babylonia after its conquest by the Iranians.

The document has been hailed as the first charter of human rights, and in 1971 the United Nations was published translation of it in all the official U.N. languages. "May Ahura Mazda protect this land, this nation, from rancor, from foes, from falsehood, and from drought". Selected from the book "The Eternal Land".

This is a confirmation that the Charter of freedom of Humankind issued by Cyrus the Great on his coronation day in Babylon could be considered superior to the Human Rights Manifesto issued by the French revolutionaries in their first national assembly. The Human Rights Manifesto looks very interesting in its kind regarding the expressions and composition, but the Charter of Freedom issued twenty three centuries before that by the Iranian monarch sounds more spiritual.

Comparing the Human Rights Manifesto of the French National Assembly and the Charter approved by the United Nations with the Charter of Freedom of Cyrus, the latter appears more valuable considering its age, explicitness, and rejection of the superstitions of the ancient world.

Cyrus the Great entered the city of Babylon in 539 BCE, and after the winter, on the first day of spring, he was officially crowned:

My numerous troops moved about undisturbed in the midst of Babylon. I did not allow anyone to terrorise the land of Sumer and Akkad. I kept in view the needs of Babylon and all its sanctuaries to promote their well being. The citizens of Babylon ... I lifted their unbecoming yoke. Their dilapidated dwellings I restored. I put an end to their misfortunes.

The description of the coronation of Cyrus is the most elaborate one in the world written by the Greek philosopher, politician, and historian Xenophon.

On the day of coronation, Cyrus read the Charter of Freedom out after he put on the crown with his hand in Marduk Temple.

Uncertain and the full text of the Charter was unavailable until an inscription was found during the excavation works in the old city of Ur in Mesopotamia. After the translation of the words, it was found out that the document was the same Charter. It is now kept in the British Museum and it is no exaggeration to say that it is one of the most precious historical records of the world.

In the Charter, after introducing himself and mentioning the names of his father, first, second, and third ancestors, Cyrus says that he is the monarch of Iran, Babylon, and the four continents:

I am Kourosh (Cyrus), King of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters, son of Camboujyah (Cambyases), great king, king of Anshân, grandson of Kourosh (Cyrus), great king, king of Anshân, descendant of Chaish-Pesh (Teispes), great king, king of Anshân, progeny of an unending royal line, whose rule Bel and Nabu cherish, whose kingship they desire for their hearts, pleasure. When I well-disposed, entered Babylon, I set up a seat of domination in the royal palace amidst jubilation and rejoicing. Marduk the great god, caused the big-hearted inhabitants of Babylon to me, I sought daily to worship him.

He continues:

At my deeds Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced and to me, Kourosh (Cyrus), the king who worshipped him, and to Kaboujyah (Cambyases), my son, the offspring of (my) loins, and to all my troops he graciously gave his blessing, and in good spirit before him we glorified exceedingly his high divinity. All the kings who sat in throne rooms, throughout the four quarters, from the Upper to the Lower Sea, those who dwelt in, all the kings of the West Country, who dwelt in tents, brought me their heavy tribute and kissed my feet in Babylon. From ... to the cities of Ashur, Susa, Agade and Eshnuna, the cities of Zamban, Meurnu, Der as far as the region of the land of Gutium, the holy cities beyond the Tigris whose sanctuaries had been in ruins over a long period, the gods whose abode is in the midst of them, I returned to their places and housed them in lasting abodes.

I gathered together all their inhabitants and restored (to them) their dwellings. The gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonids had, to the anger of the lord of the gods, brought into Babylon. I, at the bidding of Marduk, the great lord, made to dwell in peace in their habitations, delightful abodes.

May all the gods whom I have placed within their sanctuaries address a daily prayer in my favour before Bel and Nabu, that my days may be long, and may they say to Marduk my lord, "May Kourosh (Cyrus) the King, who reveres thee, and Kaboujyah (Cambyases) his son ..."

and:

Now that I put the crown of kingdom of Iran, Babylon, and the nations of the four directions on the head with the help of (Ahura) Mazda, I announce that I will respect the traditions, customs and religions of the nations of my empire and never let any of my governors and subordinates look down on or insult them until I am alive. From now on, till (Ahura) Mazda grants me the kingdom favor, I will impose my monarchy on no nation. Each is free to accept it , and if any one of them rejects it , I never resolve on war to reign. Until I am the king of Iran, Babylon, and the nations of the four directions, I never let anyone oppress any others, and if it occurs , I will take his or her right back and penalize the oppressor.

And until I am the monarch, I will never let anyone take possession of movable and landed properties of the others by force or without compensation. Until I am alive, I prevent unpaid, forced labor. To day, I announce that everyone is free to choose a religion. People are free to live in all regions and take up a job provided that they never violate other's rights.

No one could be penalized for his or her relatives' faults. I prevent slavery and my governors and subordinates are obliged to prohibit exchanging men and women as slaves within their own ruling domains. Such a traditions should be exterminated the world over.

I implore to (Ahura) Mazda to make me succeed in fulfilling my obligations to the nations of Iran, Babylon, and the ones of the four directions.

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